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# The spy scandals: Can we rely on West Germany?

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When I first started my long career in intelligence, some 40 years ago among the ruins of Berlin, my chief explained to me that secret intelligence operations were a vital ingredient of national security but — like certain bodily functions that are essential for good health — best not performed in public.

Whether by accident or design this philosophy seems to have been overtaken by events. Not only have intelligence activities emerged among the well-publicized growth industries, but few are the days, it would seem, without one or another aspect of what used to be secret operations making the front pages of newspapers. Soviet defectors, German spies, French saboteurs, American traitors, wholesale expulsions of diplomats, alleged diplomats, journalists and businessmen continue to keep the public ware of the grimy details of what was once the "silent service."

Increasingly, intelligence is being treated as if it were just another aspect of conventional government activities. Indeed, President Reagan in his June 29 radio speech said that one of the challenges confronting him is the need to prove our own intelligence-gathering capabilities and to counter the rash of spy activities that threaten our security and our interests at home and abroad. According to the president, the number and sophistication of Soviet bloc and other hostile intelligence service activities have been increasing in recent years.

The truth is that almost all countries of the world are targets of Soviet espionage. In the face of well-planned and persistent Soviet penetration efforts, no country has been able to maintain perfect security. No

country has been without its share of traitors. This includes the United States. This past summer at least a dozen persons were awaiting trial in the United States on charges of espionage, the highest number ever.

The expulsion of more than two dozen Soviet intelligence officers from Great Britain a few weeks ago, following the defection of a senior Soviet KGB operative in London, suggests extensive Soviet espionage in England. This should come as no great surprise, considering the massive successes the Soviets have achieved in Great Britain over a period of some four decades.

It is, however, in the German Federal Republic, or West Germany, that the activities of the Communist intelligence services have come into the clearest focus. This did not just happen but reflects geographic and historical realities along with carefully planned, well-staffed and generously financed espionage operations.

The presence of the U.S. military in West Germany, the Federal Republic's own military strength, the industrial and technological significance of the country and the lessons of history make West Germany a priority target for the Soviet Russian, East German and Czech intelligence services, second only to the United States.

It cannot be denied that the Soviets and the East Germans have been unusually successful in West Germany and have also caused great political damage and loss of prestige to successive administrations in Bonn.

In no other country has an espionage

case helped to bring down a head of government, as happened with German Chancellor Willy Brandt; resulted in the resignation of a minister of defense, when Georg Leber left office after the discovery that his principal secretary was a spy for many years, or caused the dismissal of a national intelligence chief, as happened recently with Heribert Hellenbroich, for his failure to report on the problems of Hans Joachim Tiedge, one of his key subordinates, who has since defected to East Germany.

While it is unlikely that German Federal President Richard von Weizsacker, Chancellor Helmut Kohl or Economics Minister Martin Bangemann will suffer personal political consequences because of recently discovered espionage activities in their respective secretarial staffs, this alters neither the damage to national security interests nor softens the blow to the prestige of the government.

The chain of West German espionage scandals is a very long one. There has been a simply astonishing number of military officers, intelligence officials, civil servants, parliamentary deputies and others in more humble pursuits who could be motivated to work for Communist interests. It is ironic and very bitter that the very heads of the counter-intelligence sections, supposedly the first line of defense against foreign espionage, should themselves have come under hostile control.

What, then, is the cost of these continuing intelligence debacles? It is very high in terms of West German and to a lesser extent also U.S. and British intelligence interests. A well-

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placed spy in a counter-intelligence section can not only provide protection of hostile agents but can have a devastating effect on the intelligence collection operations of his own service and on all other operations of Western intelligence that are coordinated with his service. Imagine the prospects of a football team whose quarterback is secretly controlled by the opposing team.

Information from the offices of the chancellor or the economics minister undoubtedly gave the Communist side important advantages in diplomatic or economic negotiations. Favorable trade terms, capital investments, financial concessions and industrial development deals could all be promoted through accurate and timely knowledge of the negotiating positions of the other side.

In the scientific and technical areas the successes of Soviet espionage are of the greatest importance. They permit the upgrading of Soviet capacity by taking advantage of the results of time- and money-consuming experimental processes undertaken in Western countries, permitting the Soviets to profit from Western research and development.

The question of military secrets is more complicated and also more emotional. The discovery of military secrets is viewed as a blow to national pride. All countries have legal requirements to guard the nation's secrets, along with an emotional compulsion to do so. The Soviets devote immense effort to discover U.S. and NATO secrets through spies in West Germany. But here we have a paradox: While in time of war the exposure of military secrets to the enemy can have far-reaching, deadly consequences, the military dispositions, plans and capabilities have no permanent value. If there is no war, the value of the information will be nullified — sooner or later — by the passage of time.

In the political arena the continuing spy scandals in West Germany contribute to an intangible but substantial loss of prestige and they generate doubts and suspicions that make inter-Allied and particularly U.S.-West German cooperation more difficult.

This cooperation, forged in the 1950s between President Dwight Eisenhower and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, continues to be based on mutual interests and faith in the need and the permanence of the existing relations. But these have always been complicated by differences of history, traditions, language, misunderstanding and even ignorance about each other's conditions. The spy scandals add to the mixture elements of doubt, suspicion and the reasonable concern on the American side that the advantages of working with the West Germans may be outweighed by the impotence in Bonn when it comes to protecting mutual security interests.

Official relations between Washing-

ton and Bonn have seldom been characterized by love, warmth or enthusiasm, particularly on this side of the Atlantic. Nonetheless, there has been a sound calculation of mutual advantages on a platform of mutual respect. The inevitable result of each major spy affair in Bonn is an erosion in the American respect, a hesitation to share secrets and an increase in the asymmetry of power between the Federal Republic and its Western Allies, a condition that many West Germans already resent.

Based on my own long experience in West Germany, I remain satisfied and confident that the United States can afford to work with the West Germans in all important areas, even while accepting the likelihood that there will be continuing losses of sensitive information because of the pervasive presence of Soviet and East German intelligence agents in West Germany. The leaks through the spies cannot cancel the overriding importance and political symbolism of the U.S. presence in West Germany or of the NATO alliance.

While concerns and suspicions about the cohesion and reliability of the Federal Republic as a member of the Western community of nations may seem justified to some based on the security considerations alone, it would be self-defeating if we permitted the Soviet espionage activities to do greater damage after they are exposed than they could do in their active phases. In terms of the true national interests, the continuing cooperation between the United States and West Germany remains of immeasurably greater consequence than the information that the Soviet or East German spies can deliver to their masters.

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